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ABSTRACT

As part of the Final Report of the National Study of American Indian Education, this study viewed the education of Indian children and youth through the eyes of the people most involved in the process: (1) students, (2) parents, (3) community leaders, and (4) teachers. As noted, this required a representative sample of the people in each of the 4 categories and their perceptions and evaluations of Indian education. The sample communities studied were representative of all socioeconomic and geographic situations in which Indians live. In the study, which covered 28 communities and 27 school systems, information was obtained by a team of people who lived and worked in the communities for several weeks and who observed, interviewed, and administered questionnaires or social psychological instruments. Data gathered for the study were analyzed and interpreted via rating scales, which were made by listing dimensions covered by the interviews and then constructing a 5- to 7-point scale for each dimension. Listed in the appendix are descriptive titles of all rating scales for the 4 types of interviews used in the study. (21)

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The National Study of American Indian Education



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FINAL REPORT

Series IV. No. 7

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THE USE OF INTERVIEWS AND RATING SCALES
IN THE STUDY OF INDIAN EDUCATION

Robert J. Havighurst

RC 005015

NATIONAL STUDY OF AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION

The attached paper is one of a number which make up the Final Report of the National Study of American Indian Education.

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The Final Report consists of five Series of Papers:

- I. Community Backgrounds of Education in the Communities Which Have Been Studied.
- II. The Education of Indians in Urban Centers.
- III. Assorted Papers on Indian Education--mainly technical papers of a research nature.
- IV. The Education of American Indians--Substantive Papers.
- V. A Survey of the Education of American Indians.

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THE USE OF INTERVIEWS AND RATING SCALES IN THE STUDY OF INDIAN EDUCATION

A major purpose of the National Study of American Indian Education was to look at the education of Indian children and youth through the eyes of the people most involved in the process--students, parents, local community leaders, and teachers. This required the following:

1. A representative sample of the people in each of the four categories.
2. An objective method of securing their perceptions and evaluations of Indian education.
3. Data which could be put together in quantitative form and which could be interpreted usefully.
4. A careful and objective analysis and interpretation of the data.

In this paper we will report our procedure and experience in trying to meet these four criteria.

The Sample

The sample of communities that we studied does represent all the socioeconomic and geographic situations in which Indian people live. But, with only 28 communities and 37 school systems, we cannot claim to have a sample of schools which are statistically representative of the several hundred school systems in which as many as a hundred Indian pupils are to be found. It was more useful to study a limited number of schools and communities rather intensively, than to make a superficial study of a random sample of schools, and of persons related to those schools, drawn scientifically from the universe of schools with Indian pupils. Our experience of reading the many and varied reports in published and unpublished form from people all over the country who have examined Indian education confirms our conclusion that our sample was reasonably representative, and did not contain more than two or three extremely rare situations.

Method of Securing Information

Once the communities had been chosen for study, our method was to send a team of people to live and work in the community for several weeks, where they would observe, interview, and administer questionnaires or social psychological instruments. The research team was rounded out in most cases by a small group of local persons who interviewed parents. The interviews with students, teachers, and community leaders were generally made by members of the visiting team, though a few interviews with students were also made by local persons.

The great advantage and the great importance of employing local people to interview parents lay in the two facts that (1) the local native language could be used wherever this was desirable, and (2) the respondent was speaking to local interviewers rather than to people who represented to him the authority of "Washington," or the BIA, or "the University." This latter factor may be construed as a disadvantage, also, if we suppose that some parents would respond more freely and critically to a stranger than to a local resident who might report their words

locally. It would certainly be a disadvantage if the local community was divided on certain educational issues and if the interviewer was known to have a strong opinion on these issues. In view of this possible disadvantage, our Field Directors attempted to avoid employing interviewers who were known as outspoken members of one or another faction. Also, our own research staff did some parent interviewing where they thought there might be a problem of local dissension and partisanship.

The Interview Instrument

In order to discover and record and report the perceptions and evaluations that people have of the educational system, we must have a flexible procedure which encourages people to respond fully and freely, to express their attitudes in their own ways, and to clarify and expand their first brief answers to questions that have some depth. Furthermore, we are seeking information from people on a topic they have not generally talked about or read about. We are dealing with adults and youth who, on the average, have had little formal education and little opportunity to observe a variety of schools.

For this purpose, we have used an "open-ended interview." That is, we have asked the respondent a series of pre-designed questions which he may answer either briefly, with a "yes," "no," "I don't know," or with a long statement. If his answer is very brief or unclear, the interviewer asks further questions to bring out the respondent's ideas. The interviewer is an important element of the method. His job is: to ask the questions, translated into the local language, if necessary, and amplified so as to help the respondent make full answers; to record the answers, in writing, or with a tape recorder; and to encourage the respondent to speak fully and freely. Interviewers were trained by the Field Directors, usually through an initial discussion of the interview schedule, and then through conferences on their first one or two interview reports.

The interview schedule itself was a product of preliminary work and trial interviewing by various members of the research staff. Those who had the most experience with Indian parents and Indian schools took the lead in this work.

This kind of interview clearly would not give many clear-cut yes-no responses to such questions as "Do you think your child's teacher is doing a good job?" Rather, the respondent was encouraged to talk about the teacher, to say what was good or bad about the teacher, and to say what he likes or dislikes about teachers in general. Thus, the data from the interview can seldom be placed in yes or no boxes and counted. Rather they should be placed on some sort of scale varying from good to bad, or from a great deal to very little, or from I like it very much to I don't like it at all.

Thus we need a set of rating scales, and a set of judges or readers to apply the rating scales to the interviews.

If we had used "pre-coded" interview schedules, where the respondents' answers were recorded by check-marks in boxes and then counted, we believe that our results would have very little validity as evidence of the perceptions and evaluations by Indian parents, students, and community leaders of their schools.

The Rating Procedure

Each interview item was designed to get information on the respondent's attitude, or knowledge, or customary behavior on some topic or problem. From reading the interview as reported, the reader can conclude that Respondent A is quite favorable to the school, or quite unfavorable; that the respondent knows a great deal, or very little, about the school; that the respondent would very much, or not much, like to have a certain subject taught in school, etc.

Such data, provided by the interview, can be placed on rating scales, and the resulting scores can be analyzed and interpreted like scores on a test, or on a questionnaire.

The rating procedure, to be used scientifically, requires:

- (1) A set of rating scales, appropriate to the data of the interviews;
- (2) A reliable procedure for applying the scales to interviews;
- (3) A statistical procedure for analyzing the ratings.

The rating scales were made by the following procedure. A list of dimensions covered by the interview was drawn up by the research staff. A tentative rating scale was then constructed for each dimension. There were always between 5 and 7 steps or points on a rating scale--generally six. The group who created the scale first read a number of interviews, then defined the steps or points on the scale, with illustrations of responses from the interviews which fitted the various scale points. For each type of interview there was a committee consisting of members of several field center staffs. Thus the whole range of interviews came into use.

The tentative set of rating scales was then applied by at least four or five people from different centers to a number of their interviews. They made note of any problems they met, and made revisions of the wording of the rating scales. Finally they came together for an intensive work period, to produce the final rating scale.

The final rating scales were put together into manuals and given to every field center. Each field center then read and rated its own interviews, tabulated the ratings, and sent them to the Chicago Center for integrated and comparative analysis. Each Center used its own ratings for study of its own schools and communities.

Validity and Reliability of the Ratings. There are two basic questions which must be answered positively if we can have faith in the findings from our interview studies. They are:

- (1) Do the rating scales actually report the "real" attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of the respondent? In other words, are the interviews and their rating scales valid?
- (2) Are the rating scales being applied consistently by various judges or raters from the various field centers, so that comparisons may be made between communities, and so that various judges or raters give equal ratings to a given interview? In other words, is the rating procedure reliable?

Our answers to these questions are given in Papers 8 and 9 of this Series. These answers are a qualified positive. That is, the rating scales are generally useful, while some of the rating scales are more valid than others, and some are more reliable than others.

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The actual rating manuals are too voluminous to reproduce here. Instead, we have listed in the Appendix the descriptive titles of all the rating scales for the four types of interview, and we have reproduced a rating scale for one dimension for each interview.

A P P E N D I X

LISTS OF DIMENSIONS ON WHICH THE INTERVIEWS HAVE BEEN RATED

Interview with Parents

Interview with Students

Interview with Teachers

Interview with Community Leaders

Note: The Rating Dimensions and Scales which we have actually used in comparing the various schools have been marked with an asterisk.

INTERVIEW WITH PARENTS

N=735

- I. Parent's Knowledge of the School
 - *A. Parent's Factual Knowledge of the School's Program and Policy
- II. Parent's Ideas and Attitudes Concerning the Education of His Child
 - A. Extent and Clarity of the Parent's Ideas Concerning His Child's Educational Needs
 - *B. Parent's Perception of How Well the School is Meeting the Needs of His Child
 - *C. Parent's Attitude Toward Formal Education
 - D. Parent's Perception of the Relation of School to His Child's Adult Life
- III. Student's Home Background
 - A. Extent of the Child's Participation in Family Activities
 - B. Extent and Quality of Adult Instruction
 - C. Parent's Involvement and Interest in the Life and Concerns of His Child
- IV. Personal and Community Involvement in the School
 - *A. Parent's Actual Involvement in School Affairs
 - B. The Parent's Perception of His Influence as an Individual Over the School Program and Policy
 - C. Parent's Perception of the Community's Actual Involvement in the Affairs of the School
 - D. Parent's View of How Much Control the Community Should Have over School Program and Policy
- V. Parental Attitudes and Practices Regarding Tribal Culture and Language
 - A. Parent's Attitude Toward Tribal Culture as Expressed in His Concern for Child's Socialization into Tribal Culture (Excluding Language)
 - B. Parent's Actual Practice Directed Toward Enhancing the Child's Socialization into the Tribal Culture
 - *C. Parent's Attitude Concerning the School's Relationship to Tribal Culture
 - D. Parent's Perception of School's Actual Relationship to Tribal Culture
 - E. Parent's Attitude Concerning the Child's Learning of Tribal Language
- VI. Parent's Opinions Concerning Various Aspects of the School
 - *A. Parent's Opinion of his Child's Teacher's Performance
 - *B. Parent's Opinion of the Curriculum in his Child's School
 - *C. Parent's Opinion of the Performance of the School Administration
 - D. Parent's Opinion of the Performance of the School Board
- VII. Parent's Perception of the School's Relationship to Himself and the Community
 - A. Parent's Perception of the Teacher's Efforts to Talk to Him About his Child's Life in School
 - B. Parent's Knowledge of and Opinion Concerning the School's Programs for Adults

*Dimensions and scales marked with an asterisk have been used in Papers 10, 11, and 12 in Series IV.

EXAMPLE OF RATING SCALE

VI.A. Parent's Opinion of His Child's Teacher's Performance

This dimension tries to assess how the parent feels about his child's teacher: is he doing a good job? a poor job? This is not quite the same as an attitude; it does not consider whether or not the parent likes the teacher as a person. It is a measure of the parent's evaluation of the teacher's teaching.

The most relevant questions are: Part II, questions 7-11 and 14, in particular Q.10: "How well is the teacher doing?"
(This scale is comparable to Student Scale 0,)

1. Very negative. Parent thinks that his child's teacher, or almost all teachers in the school are doing a very poor job.

Example: None as yet.

2. Negative. Parent thinks that his child's teacher is not doing a very good job.

Examples:

- I. "How well is the teacher doing?" "I don't know." What is a good teacher like?" "I don't know, but our children say their teachers don't teach enough."
- II. Part I. Q.2: "What don't you like about the school?" "The teachers use profane language at the students. The teachers are not qualified for their jobs." But this same respondent says that his child's teacher is doing "all right." "Adequacy of Data" should thus be rated as 2: Inconclusive.

3. Slightly negative. Parent thinks that his child's teacher does a fair job. He may say that his child's teacher is "OK," but then go on to say something negative about a specific aspect of his teaching. Or he thinks that there are some good and some poor teachers, but that more of them are poor than are good.

Example:

- I "I think she is all right, but she may neglect G. because his behavior is very poor in responding to adults."
4. Slightly positive. Parent thinks that his child's teacher is "OK" or about average in comparison with other teachers. Or he thinks that there are some good and some poor teachers, but that more of them are good than are poor.

Example:

- I "How well is the teacher doing?" "All right."
- II "Most are OK. Others aren't so good."

5. Positive. Parent thinks that his child's teacher is doing a pretty good job, or that most of the teachers, though not all, do a pretty good job.

Examples:

I "M. said the teacher was teaching good lessons in school."

II "The teacher is doing well."

III "He's doing fine."

6. Very positive. Parent thinks that his child's teacher is doing an excellent job, or that almost all the teachers in the school are doing a good job.

Examples:

I "I think she is doing a great job."

II "I think he's doing great and teaching more students good English."

INTERVIEW WITH STUDENTS

N=2,422

- A. Student's Perception of his Parents' Attitude Toward Formal Education
- B. Student's Perception of his Parent's Feeling about the School he is Now Attending
- C. Student's Perception of Parental Involvement in School Affairs
- D. Student's Degree of Proficiency in his Tribal Language
- E. With Whom a Student Uses Tribal Language
- F. Student's Attitude Toward His Tribal Language
- G. Knowledge of Tribal Culture
- H. Where Respondent Learned About His Tribal Culture
- I. Attitude Toward Tribal Culture
- *J. Attitude Toward School's Relationship To Tribal Culture
- *K. Respondent's Opinion of the School He Is Now Attending
- *L. Interest in the School--Academic Aspect
- M. Interest in the School: Non-Academic (Mainly Social) Aspect
- N. Perceived Relation of School To Adult Life
- *O. Respondent's Opinion of Teacher's Performance as a Teacher

EXAMPLE OF RATING SCALE

Dimension K. Respondent's Opinion of the School He Is Now Attending

Data for this will come primarily from Part V, questions 9, 10, and 11.

1. Terrible or poor--Respondent feels that this is one of the worst schools around.

Example:

"Lake View is better than Senn H.S. I don't like Senn. All other schools are better."

2. Worse--Respondent feels that this school is worse than the average, but not one of the worst.

Example:

"Well, Stockton is a pretty rough school. They don't have schools in Beloit that rough." "It's a little bit worse than the others, because they don't have very good kids here." "It's not too good."

3. Slight negative--In response to question #9, respondent indicates that he feels the school is "about average." However, in response to questions 10 and 11, he indicates that his dislikes concerning the school are stronger than his likes. Thus, he is somewhat vague about his opinion of the school, but seems more negative than positive.

Example:

"St. Francis and Rosebud about even. The kids are nicer at Rosebud." "It's on and off--better and worse. The attitudes of kids toward Indians is bad."

4. Slightly positive--In response to question 9 respondent indicates that he feels the school is "about average." However, in response to questions 10 and 11 it seems that his likes concerning the school are stronger than his dislikes. Thus, he is somewhat vague about his opinion of the school, but seems more positive than negative.

Example:

"Eagle Butte is stricter." (Student is from Eagle Butte and emphasizes in Q.11 the positive virtues of the school.) "It's warmer." "How about the teachers?" "They are about the same." (Respondent thus feels that the teachers--an important aspect of school--are about the same, yet indicates that he feels more positively about another minor aspect.)

5. Better--Respondent feels that this school is better than the average school, though not really one of the best.

Example:

"I think it's pretty good." "Better?" "Yes," "Why?" "It's cleaner." "Any other reasons?" "No." "It's better than other schools I've been to, though Goudy was good, too."

6. Excellent--Respondent feels that this is one of the best schools around, in all respects.

Example: None as yet in data.

INTERVIEW WITH TEACHERS

N=468

- * A. Teacher's Experience and Knowledge of the Local Indian Community
- * B. Teacher's Degree of Understanding of and Sympathy for the Problems of the Indian Children and Adults Who Are Involved with this School
- * C. Teacher's Attitude Toward Assimilation Versus Maintaining a Separate Indian Culture
- D. Teacher's Perception of the School's Actual Relationship to the Tribal Culture
- E. Teacher's Perception of Indian Students
- * F. Teacher's Attitudes Toward Teaching Indian Children
- G. Teacher's Recommendations for Training Teachers to Work with Indian Pupils
- H. Teacher's Perception of Parental Involvement in School Affairs
- I. Degree of Teacher's Involvement in the Life of Students Outside the Classroom
- J. Teacher's Perception of her Indian Student's Interest in the Academic Aspect of School
- K. Teacher's Perception of her Indian Student's Home Background

EXAMPLE OF RATING SCALE

B. Teacher's Degree of Understanding of and Sympathy for the Problems of Indian Children and Adults Who Are Involved with This School

The most relevant questions for this dimension are questions 4, 16, 17, 18, 24-28, 32, 35-37, and 39.

1. Has no feeling at all for the Indians with whom he comes into contact. Does not understand their problems or situation at all. May tend to be quite critical of Indians.

Example:

I. Q. 32: "A large percentage of them are just plain lazy.

Too many things are given to the Indians:

1. Not too many years ago, they got free hospital and doctor services.
2. Per capita payments four times a year.
3. Many are on welfare.
4. Basically free water and sanitation facilities.
5. After the 1964 flood they got an inexpensive housing plan.

Why work when you can get the basics almost for nothing?"

Q. 35: "No."

Q. 36: "Yes, the Indian pupils aren't any different than the white."

Q. 37: "No."

This teacher demonstrates little understanding of and no sympathy for the problems of Indians in their areas.

2. Has a vague sympathy for Indian children and youth as people who are disadvantaged but has little or no conception of the problems they face.

Example:

I. Q.26: "Naturally an education. Also to be able to feel their rightful place in Chicago. I get the impression that some of them feel oppressed or inferior."

Q.32: "I don't know--it's difficult to say. I guess their economic level."

This teacher is sympathetic toward the problems of Indian people in her area, but she does not understand these problems very well at all.

3. Has some sympathy for specific problems and aspects of the situation in which his Indian pupils and their families are living, but he does not really understand the total situation of the Indian people in this community.

Example:

- I. Q. 17: "Of course. One thing this community needs is parent participation. They have the concern, but they're afraid of the system. How can they as individuals affect the Chicago Board of Education? I've talked with parents who can't understand things about the school but are afraid to come in. A lot of people don't come for good reasons--they're working, cooking, cleaning, etc. And many don't see any real reason to come."
- Q. 26: "Reading--and how to get along in the city."
- Q. 32: "I don't really know. The problems of most of the people in neighborhood--they're trapped, they come from far away to a near slum, the children don't learn anything, they can't move out. They need better job training so that they can get better jobs. The size of the family hinders mobility, too."

This teacher has a sympathetic understanding of the problems of Indians in Chicago in that they are generally poor, rural immigrants to the city, for this teacher is herself a "migrant" from the southeastern U.S. and knows many "poor white" families in the city. However, she does not understand the problems which Indians face as Indians; to her they are like the other poor, rural migrants to Chicago.

4. Has a good understanding of and a relatively broad sympathy for the Indian people and their problems, but remains somewhat removed from them--as an "outsider."

Example:

- I. Q. 26: "Practice with using English and Concepts, also confidence in their ability to learn."
- Q. 27: "In social studies we discuss Indians in terms of race and Indian qualities. We plan a course on contemporary Indian affairs, where we'll study laws affecting Indians, copies of treaties, constitutions, etc."
- Q. 32: "For the students here, the sense of 'leaving the womb'--being excluded from their families and local communities. Independent of the boarding school situation, they realize that they are 'marginal men.' The loss of identity as Indians is hard on them. They are becoming better by belonging to two cultures but this is uncomfortable."

This man teaches at a boarding school and does not have direct experience and understanding of the local communities from which his students come. However, he demonstrates a good understanding of and concern for the more general problems of the Indian young people at his school.

5. Empathic understanding--may or may not fully agree with the values and attitudes that dominate the group, but has a sensitivity to and a respect for them as a coherent, valuable way of life. And/or exhibits a thorough understanding of and a deep concern for and involvement with the problems of his Indian pupils and the community they come from.

Example:

- I. Q. 4: "Navajos have more of a language problem than Alaskans because more of them speak their native language. I taught Navajos in elementary school before, so I know what to expect. This background is of great value."
- Q. 18: "Yes, Navajos."
- Q. 25: "No, but a knowledge of and respect for their culture and way of life are important to help understand the problems that develop."
- Q. 32: "They (the students) need to plan to use their leisure time. The kids need to learn to carry more responsibility. They are too dependent on others to make their decisions."
(This school is a BIA boarding school where the students' lives are very much directed by the school.)
- Q. 34: "I had three years' experience on a reservation, and this did a great deal to alter my attitudes. I learned to respect them."
- Q. 39: "In public schools there is prejudice and discrimination against the Indians, subtle attitudes are present and you are forced out."

This teacher demonstrates a real feeling for the problems of her pupils and for their more "traditional" way of life. (She is not actually involved in the problems of an entire Indian community because the boarding school is located 1,000 miles or more from the homes of most of its pupils.)

INTERVIEW WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS

N=190

- A. Respondent's Knowledge of the School or Schools in the Community
- *B. Respondent's Over-all Evaluation of the School Program for Indian Students
- C. Respondent's Attitude Toward Aiming the School Program to Assist Students in Efficient Participation in Modern Society
- *D. R's perception of Effectiveness of School in Assisting Students Toward Efficient Participation in Modern Society
- *E. R's Attitude Toward Teaching Tribal History and Culture in the School.
- F. R's Perception of Effectiveness of School in Teaching "Indian-ness"
- G. R's Perception of School Staff's Knowledge of Tribal Culture and History
- H. R's Attitude Toward Using or Teaching Indian Language in School
- *I. R's Perception of Extent of Local Community Influence on School Program
- *J. R's Attitude Toward Local Community Influence or Control over the School
- K. R's Perception of Parental Approval-Disapproval of the School
- L. R's Attitude Toward Extension of School Program to Adult Education and other non-traditional Aspects of Education
- M. R's Attitude Toward Having Indian Teachers for Indian Pupils.
- N. Extent of R's Actual Influence on Local School Program

EXAMPLE OF RATING SCALE

M. Attitude Toward Having Indian Teachers for Indian Students

This dimension seeks the opinion of the respondent on the importance and value of having Indian teachers for Indian students.

Relevant Questions: 4, 13, 15-18, 19, 20.

1. R sees this as undesirable. It is better to have white teachers for Indian pupils.
2. R sees this as an unimportant question. What is needed is a good teacher, and the fact of being Indian does not count.
(This rating applies mainly to schools with a majority of white children.)
3. It would be good for Indian children to have some Indian and some white teachers. This would help them to relate to whites and Indians in various important situations. But where the Indian child is in a school with mostly white children, it cannot be expected that the teachers would be Indian.
4. Indian children should have some Indian teachers, at least. It would substantially improve the education of Indian children if they had Indian teachers. R comments that it cannot be brought about for some years, and maybe never.
5. This is desirable, for a number of reasons. Where there are difficulties, as in the case of predominantly white schools, there should be at least one Indian in a teaching role for Indian children, even if they have this contact no more than an hour a day.
6. This is the most important improvement that could take place for Indian education. Indian children should all have Indian teachers.